



Brick Lane, 1979 ©Jacob Sutton

The Bengali East End exhibition

Ever wondered how the Bangladeshi community's settlement took shape in Tower Hamlets? A brand new exhibition telling the story of Bengali people in the East End has been curated by Shahera Begum of Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives, in partnership with Swadhinata Trust, a locally based organisation promoting Bengali cultural heritage.

Using newly acquired photographs, oral histories and archival materials from the council's collections, *The Bengali East End* traces the history of Bangladeshi people in Tower Hamlets, exploring the experiences of Bengali East Enders and their contributions to contemporary British culture. *The Bengali East End* exhibition will be on display until 3 May 2012. Please see our opening hours at the end of this newsletter.

Dickens anniversary celebrations



Dickens Circa 1867 by Jeremiah Gurney

The Local History Library and Archives is involved in three free events as part of Cityread London's *Dickens' London* festival in April, celebrating the 200th anniversary of Charles Dickens' birth.

On **Tuesday 17th April** at 6pm at the Local History Library and Archives, acclaimed historian Professor Jerry White will give a talk on "Law and Order in Oliver Twist's London" (email localhistory@towerhamlets.gov.uk or call 020 7364 1290 to book your place).

On **Friday April 20th** Borough Archivist, Malcolm Barr-Hamilton will lead a walking tour of Limehouse pointing out the Dickens

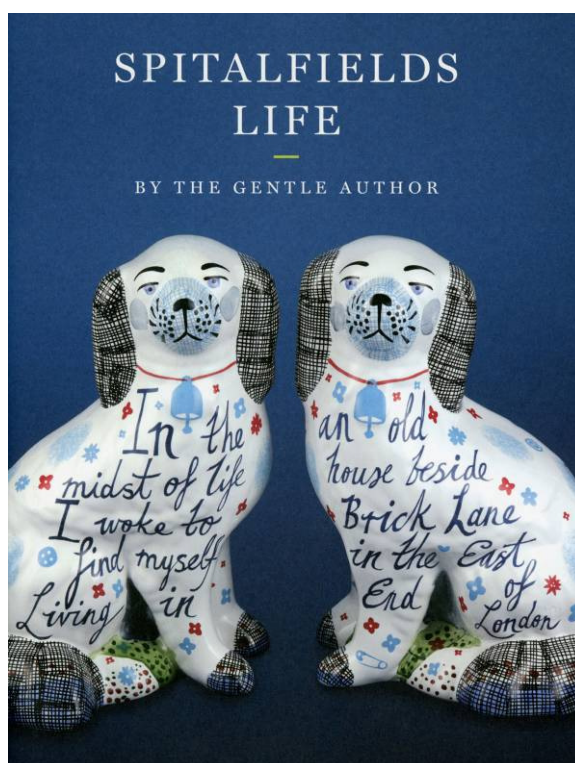
connections with this fascinating riverside area. Starts Westferry Station (DLR) at 2pm. (Booking essential, email localhistory@towerhamlets.gov.uk or call 020 7364 1290 to book your free place).

From 4th to 18th April there will be an exhibition at Idea Store Chrisp Street, *Workhouses in the East End* that will look at the reality behind the fiction based on photographs and other historical resources about workhouses from Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives.

New book for sale

***Spitalfields Life: In the Midst of Life I Woke to Find Myself Living in an Old House Beside Brick Lane in the East End of London* by The Gentle Author. Published by Saltyard Books, 2012.**

Drawing comparisons with Pepys, Mayhew and Dickens, the gentle author of the blog 'Spitalfields Life' has gained an extraordinary following in recent years, by writing hundreds of lively pen portraits of the infinite variety of people who live and work in the East End of London. Everything you seek in London can be found here - street life, street art, markets, diverse food, immigrant culture, ancient houses and history, pageants and parades, rituals and customs, traditional trades and old family businesses.



CARIBBEAN FAMILY HISTORY WORKSHOP

Our regular Caribbean Family History Workshop, led by expert Sharon Tomlin, took place on Saturday 3rd March with the theme of "Researching the female lines" - exploring and using strategies to research Caribbean female ancestors was a great success. Forthcoming sessions will include "Monumental Inscriptions of the Caribbean" and "Researching Slave records". Places are free but advance booking is recommended.

The next session is on Saturday 12th May from 12-3pm and will focus on researching Indo-Caribbean family history.

WHO IS MY NEIGHBOUR?

Our first film screening of the season was a documentary entitled 'Who is my Neighbour' by film maker Bhavesh Hindocha. Against the backdrop of huge social and economic change and upheaval in East London, this new film showed how the charity, Neighbours in Poplar, has encouraged and empowered a community to look after itself. Over 40 people came to the screening which also featured an introduction by the film-maker and Q&A with Neighbours In Poplar's Sister Christine Frost.

New additions to the catalogue

Several new books have been purchased for the library. These include

***Panoramas of lost London : work, wealth, poverty & change, 1870-1945* by Philip Davies. Published by Transatlantic Press, 2011.**

This spectacular book reproduces historic photographs commissioned by the London County Council - many of them in the early days of photography - to capture individual buildings and streets that, along with entire neighbourhoods, were on the threshold of redevelopment.

Enlarging over 180 photographs found in Lost London and with more than 100 previously unseen images, this new, large, landscape-format book provides readers with a wealth of hidden detail in these historic pictures, alongside remarkable street panoramas.

***Life and death in London's East End: 2000 years at Spitalfields* by Chris Thomas. Published by Museum of London Archaeology Service, 2004.**

This book chronicles the remarkable archaeological discoveries made on the site of Spitalfields Market. Once the burial ground for some of the

wealthiest members of Roman London, Spitalfields became the home of one of the country's largest and most important hospitals in the Middle Ages, looking after the poor and the sick. More than 10,500 skeletons were found in the cemetery, making this the single largest archaeologically-recorded group in the world. Spitalfields is also famous for its multi-ethnic community, including the first immigrants, the Huguenots, later the Jews, and today's Bangladeshi community.

***A Roman settlement and bath house at Shadwell: excavations at Tobacco Dock and Babe Ruth Restaurant, the Highway London* by Alistair Douglas, James Gerrard and Berni Sudds. Published by Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited, 2011.**

An important excavation report on two late Roman sites, adjacent to the famous Shadwell 'tower'. A large late Roman bath house and ancillary clay-and-timber buildings were discovered. This volume presents the evidence for Roman Shadwell as revealed by these excavations and considers its place within the broader context of Londinium and its hinterland.

LGBT History Month

We hosted the launch of the council's celebrations in partnership with LGBT community forum Rainbow Hamlets, with two interesting speakers. Robert Thompson of the Lesbian & Gay Newsmedia Archive (whose collection is now held at Bishopsgate Institute) gave an entertaining presentation on the changing representation of LGBT people in the mainstream press. Transgender activist Roz Kaveney discussed her life and work in conversation with Jack Gilbert.

Island History Day



Manchester Rd, c1918

Saturday 17 March was Island History Day at Cubitt Town Library, celebrating the unique heritage of the Isle of Dogs. A range of talks and stalls were held. In the morning the Borough Archivist led a group of over 20 on a guided walk around the island in spite of persistent and sometimes heavy rain.

Cataloguing news

Retrospective cataloguing of both the pamphlet collection and the periodicals collection continues with over 1100 items added to date. One of the most interesting items is "***The worker's friend***". A weekly Jewish Anarchist paper produced in the East End that became the mouthpiece for Jewish anarchist activity in the UK and Paris. The library collection holds Vol. XIX, no 5 (Apr 14 1905)-no 33 and no 36-no 50 (Feb 23 1906).

One box of pamphlets on sermons revealed thirteen pamphlets from the 18th century and seven from the 17th century, the earliest dating to 1661. Most of these pamphlets are mentioned in the English Short Title Catalogue (ESTC). The ESTC is a comprehensive, international union catalogue listing early books, serials, newspapers and selected ephemera printed before 1801. Several items do not appear to be held elsewhere including the British Library. These are "A farewell sermon preached at the tabernacle in Spittle-fields" by Luke Milbourn, 1699 and "A sermon preach'd at the parish-church of St. Mary White-Chapel, on Tuesday, October 11, 1709, at the funeral of Dame Mary Cooke, late wife of Sir John Cooke, of Doctor's-Commons, London, Knight, Doctor of Laws &c." by Samuel Clark, 1709.

SCHOOL VISITS: PHOENIX PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Students and teachers from Phoenix School in Bow visited the archive in January as part of a project to discover more about the history of the East End, led by Eastside Community Heritage. Students were particularly interested in photographs of the Roman Road market, the Bryant and May match factory and the canals and barges around Old Ford Lock. Along with 19th and 20th century maps of the area, the students were able to discover what changes had taken place in Tower Hamlets and could see how housing had been affected by bombing during World War Two.

PAINTINGS COLLECTION REVEALED ONLINE

We are pleased to announce that the collection of oil paintings of Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives is now available to view online. This has been made possible through the partnership project between the BBC website 'Your Paintings' and the Public Catalogue Foundation, a registered charity set up to create a complete record of the United Kingdom's national collection of oil, tempera and acrylic paintings, and make this freely accessible to the public.

To see the 75 paintings from our collection online, visit http://www.bbc.co.uk/arts/yourpaintings/paintings/search/collection_reference/tower-hamlets-local-history-library-and-archives-6504

The Shared Roots in Faith exhibition: the Abrahamic East End

Interact, a not-for-profit organisation that works throughout the UK promoting interfaith awareness, dialogue and action, provides opportunities for young people from different faith communities and backgrounds to work together in order to overcome stereotypes and prejudices. As part of a Heritage Lottery Fund project, Interact supported a group of young people from diverse backgrounds to produce an exhibition on display throughout London exploring the role of the Abrahamic faiths in shaping London's East End. The exhibition was on show at the Local History Library during February.

Working with local Jewish, Christian and Muslim organisations and museums and places of worship, young people produced a series of exhibition works based on interviews with individuals who have grown up in London's multi-faith East End between 1950 and 1980. The resulting exhibition illuminates the fascinating historical richness of the city, offering a new insight into the interconnected shared roots of the communities in which we live, work and pray. As part of the exhibition, an evening of storytelling, singing and discussion took place at the Local History Library on 17 February.

Noel Gibson exhibition

A thoroughly positive response greeted the recent exhibition of Noel Gibson paintings, held in the library's entrance hall. The launch of the exhibition was a great success, with over 50 attendees. Curator Anna Haward spoke about how the exhibition had evolved and also gave some background on the elusive Noel Gibson.



Sadly, she also had heard recently of Mr Gibson's death some five years ago. Gary Haines, Archivist at the Whitechapel Gallery, gave a well-received talk on the heritage value of the paintings, which included an in-depth look at several works, such as the well-publicised "Hessel Street, Stepney". Popular blog <http://spitalfieldslife.com> featured the exhibition on 2 February and we saw an immediate increase in footfall. The Spitalfields Life article on the paintings has been viewed several hundred thousand times! Staff are in the planning stages of a publication that will feature images of the works of Noel Gibson and text by Gary Haines - watch this space!

High Street 2012

Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives is pleased to be supporting the Building Exploratory (based in Hackney) with its Peoples' Panorama project. A team of 30 volunteers is researching some 600 buildings along the Olympic route from Aldgate to Stratford, also known as High Street 2012.

On a freezing Saturday morning in early February the volunteers visited the library for a training session in the use of key sources to be used in their research.



BUILDING WORK

We are currently awaiting planning and listed building consents for the next phase of our refurbishment which involves the roofs being overhauled and a new DDA-compliant lift being installed. Unfortunately, this will necessitate the temporary closure of the Local History Library and Archives for a period later in the year. Watch this space for further details.

Talks and visits

Malcolm Barr-Hamilton was a guest speaker at the AGM of the East of London Family History Society in January with a talk entitled 'Finding out more about your Cockney Ancestors using local authority records and other unusual sources at Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives'.

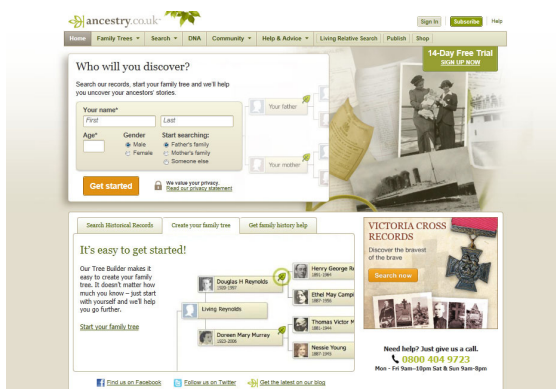
He made a couple of rare excursions south of the river also in January to speak to the Mycenae House Local History Group in Blackheath about the history of Tower Hamlets, and to the Erith and Belvedere Local History Society to present 'Images of the East End'.



Redbridge Jewish Community Centre visit

A party of users from Idea Store Bow's 60+ group visited the Local History Library and Archives at the end of January to familiarise themselves with our collections. From further afield we hosted a visit in early February, by a group of genealogists from the Redbridge Jewish Community Centre who enjoyed examining the selection of Jewish family history resources made available to them.

Electoral registers on Ancestry



Copies of the electoral registers dating from 1901 to the present day are probably the most well-used resource at Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives. The registers are arranged by address rather than name, making the searching of them quite laborious. Now the London Electoral Registers held by London Metropolitan

Archives have been digitised and are available to view on www.ancestry.com. Registers are available online for the period 1835 – 1965. Searchable by name index, these records reveal over 150 million names and addresses all over the old counties of London and Middlesex. Don't forget our library edition of Ancestry.com is available to users for free in all libraries and Idea Stores in Tower Hamlets – including, of course, Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives. Please speak to a member of staff should you require any assistance searching the online registers. Our hard copy registers remain available on open access in the reading room.

Christmas caption competition



Congratulations to Clive Price who is the lucky winner of a copy of Jack Dash's autobiography *Good morning brothers*, for his suggestion: *"Well! Mum only said keep 'yer elbows orf the table - she didn't say nuffin abart knees!"*

AND THE WINNERS ARE...



Following on from the item in the last newsletter that the staff of the Local History Library and Archives had been put forward as Best Team in the Council, we are proud to announce that we were made joint winners at a gala evening in December. An elegant trophy and framed certificate are prominently displayed in the reading room, and some members of the winning team are pictured above.

After You've Gone: East End shopfronts, 1988

We are very excited to be hosting the first exhibition of Alan Dein's photographs of East End shopfronts, which were taken in 1988 when many Tower Hamlets streets were on the verge of dereliction. Alan, an oral historian and Radio 4 broadcaster, lived in Stepney at the time and decided to capture the diminishing, decaying local shops on film, most of them relics of the once flourishing Jewish community.

These unique images have now been digitised for the local history library, and the past lives of each building has been researched by volunteers. Highlights of the collection will be exhibited alongside contextual material from the archives and contemporary photographs of the sites today. The exhibition launches on Thursday 17 May with a talk from Alan on Saturday 9 June, and will run until 12 July. For more information and images from this collection, visit Spitalfields Life:

<http://spitalfieldslife.com/2010/06/28/alan-dein-east-end-shopfronts-1988/>



Who Do You Think You Are? live show at Olympia



For the first time, we had a stand at what is billed as the "biggest family history event in the world" for three days at the end of February. This was a great success with well over 1,000 people visiting our stall over the course of the weekend to ask about their family history research and purchase books from the wide range we had on offer.

UPCOMING EVENT

'Jew Boy'

Simon Blumenfeld's 1932 novel *Jew Boy* distils poverty and politics in the tumultuous world of the Jewish East End in the 1930s, where boxers mixed with anarchists and communitiests, and Yiddish actors and poets rubbed shoulders with gamblers and gangsters. All were united in their hatred of fascism and prepared to use force when necessary to defeat it.

The novel will be introduced by Ken Worpole, with readings from this forgotten classic, presented in partnership with London Books.

This free event will take place at the Local History Library on Thursday 3 May from 6-8pm.

Picture of the month: Troxy Cinema, 490 Commerical Road, 1933



Before the Oscar season becomes a distant memory, it seems fitting to select an image of an historic East End cinema for the picture of the month. When the Troxy first opened in 1933 with the British premiere of 'King Kong', it was one of the UK's largest cinemas with 3,520 seats. It has had a varied time since its opening, including a short period of closure following wartime damage and slum clearance from November 1960 until 1963. In 1963 the building was again in use, this time as the London Opera Centre - the Royal Opera House's rehearsal space (with a small seating area for occasional performances). By 1991 the Opera House had vacated the building and the Troxy Cinema was given a Grade II listed building status by English Heritage. Subsequently it was restored and used as a site for bingo clubs and later banqueting. By 2008 the Troxy was being used as a live performance venue and today 'prides itself as the premier conferencing, exhibition, banqueting, and live concert venue (<http://www.troxy.co.uk>). The wheel has finally come full circle for the Troxy with the cinema's recent screening of David Lean's 'Brief Encounter', its first film screening in 52 years! *This summary was compiled with reference both to material within our collections and information provided at the following site: <http://cinematreasures.org/theaters/3775>)*

OPENING HOURS

Monday: **Closed**
Tuesday: 10 - 5
Wednesday: 9 - 5
Thursday: 9 - 8
Friday: **Closed**
Saturday: 9 - 5
(fortnightly)
Sunday: **Closed**

UPCOMING SATURDAY OPENING DATES

14 April and 28 April
12 May and 26 May
9 June and 23 June

Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives

Bancroft Library
277 Bancroft Road
London E1 4DQ

Tel: 020 7364 1290
Fax: 020 7364 1292
Email: localhistory@towerhamlets.gov.uk
Web: www.ideastore.co.uk

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